

Policy Number AA-2010-1027

Policy on Grade Appeal

Approved by: President's Cabinet/ Academic Affairs Council

History: Revised -- 2-17-2009

Additional History -- n/a

Related Policies: n/a

Additional References: n/a

A. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide a process for redress of grievance between a student and faculty member concerning a final grade in a course taken at Cheyney University.

B. Scope

This policy applies to all students.

C. Key words and phrases:

- GAB – stands for Grade Appeal Board
- AAUP– American Association of University Professors

D. Policy & Procedure(s)

I. Introduction

This grade appeal policy provides a process for redress of grievance between a student and a faculty member concerning a final grade in a course taken at Cheyney University. Two important points to be kept in mind concerning the application of this policy are: (1) all uses of the word "grade" in this policy refer to the final grade in a course; (2) the Grade Appeal Board (GAB) may consider approving changes only to P (pass) and W (withdraw). Any requests for changes to specific letter grades, therefore -- a change from a D to a C, for example -- would not be considered by the GAB.

Consistent with the position of the AAUP (American Association of University Professors), students should have protection through orderly procedures against unsubstantiated academic evaluation. Students who believe that their final course grade reflects unsubstantiated academic evaluation may initiate and pursue a grade change appeal in accordance with provisions of this document. Students shall not suffer academic recrimination because of participation in this procedure. At the same time, all academic rights and privileges of faculty members are to be honored in this process, and changes in final course grades are to be made only when there is clear evidence of unsubstantiated academic evaluation.

All grade change appeals shall be initiated in a timely fashion. If a grade change appeal is not resolved during the preliminary steps of this procedure, and the student wishes to pursue further an appeal for a change of grade, the student may file a Grade Appeal Petition (see Section III.C.) This petition must be filed no later than the end of the ninth week of the next regular semester.

II. Preliminary Steps

In both the preliminary steps outlined here and in the step involving the Grade Appeal Committee, the only issue under consideration will be whether or not the student can present evidence that his or her final grade reflects unsubstantiated academic evaluation by the faculty member. In pursuing a grade change appeal, the student will proceed as follows:

A. The student shall first discuss the matter with the faculty member directly involved in an attempt to resolve the matter.

B. If there is no resolution with the faculty member, the student shall discuss the matter with the chairperson of the faculty member's department, or, if the department chairperson is the person who gave the grade, with the dean of the respective college, who shall attempt to resolve the matter after consideration of the evidence.

C. If there is no resolution through the department chairperson, the student shall discuss the matter with the dean of the respective college, who shall attempt to resolve the matter after consideration of the evidence.

III. Grade Change Appeal Conditions and Procedures

A. At the beginning of each academic year there will be established a Grade Appeal Committee. This board will consist of five tenured faculty members -- one chosen from each of the five colleges of the University in an election to be conducted by the Senate Office -- and two non-voting student members to be chosen by SGCA. The board will elect its own chairperson, who must be a faculty member, and set its own operating procedures (within the guidelines stated here and in Section IV). A copy of the procedures adopted will be submitted to the University Senate for information. These procedures will be taken to APSCUF meet and discuss for approval.

The chairperson will be a voting member of the board. At least four favorable votes must be received for approval of a grade change appeal. This board should be so constituted that at least two faculty members will continue serving from one year to the next.

B. Possible Grade Change Actions

During the preliminary steps (Part II above), a grade change, if made, can be made through regular University channels. The grade assigned is at the discretion of the faculty member who assigned the original grade. If the faculty member has not agreed to a grade change during the preliminary steps and the student has appealed to the GAB, the only grades to which the GAB can consider approving changes are P (pass) and W (withdraw). Even after the appeal has reached the GAB, if the faculty member decides that a grade change is in order, the faculty member may effect said change through the usual University channels. Here, too, the grade assigned is determined by the faculty member. At this point, the student may choose to withdraw, or continue, the appeal. The student may withdraw a grade appeal petition at any time by notifying the chairperson of the GAB in writing. The chairperson of the board would then notify all parties involved.

C. If no resolution has been reached with the faculty member through the mediation of the department chairperson or the college dean, or the Ombudsperson, and the student wishes to pursue further a grade change appeal, the student shall complete a Grade Appeal Petition. This petition is to be secured from and then submitted to the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs. It will be forwarded from that office to the chairperson of the Academic Appeals Committee. Notification of the formal appeal will be given by the Vice President for Academic Affairs to the faculty member, who is requested by the GAB to submit a written response. The Grade Appeal Board will not consider nor hear complaints that it deems unsubstantiated after review of the petition. The petition shall contain:

1. The names of the student and the faculty member involved in the appeal.
2. A list of the names of those contacted in the student's attempts to resolve the issue (See Section II.), and a statement from the appropriate college dean that the conflict remains unresolved.
3. A clear, concise statement describing the grounds for the appeal.
4. A statement of the resolution requested.

D. If a hearing is deemed necessary, the GAB chairperson shall notify the student and the faculty member of its time and location. The hearing shall be scheduled for the next regularly scheduled meeting of the GAB unless circumstances warrant otherwise. In the event of a hearing, the GAB chairperson shall:

1. Provide the student and the faculty member with a copy of the GAB's rules and procedures for the hearing process.
2. Notify the faculty member, department chairperson, and dean that each may submit a written statement outlining issues of the case from his/her perspective. All statements and materials must be submitted by all parties involved to the committee chairperson no later than six (6) class days prior to the hearing.
3. Provide GAB members with copies of submitted statements and materials no later than three (3) class days prior to the hearing.

E. After considering the appeal, the chairperson of the GAB will forward its decision to the Vice President for Academic Affairs. The Vice President for Academic Affairs will notify all parties involved (student, faculty member, department chairperson, and dean) of the decision to reject the appeal or to schedule a hearing within five (5) class days of the consideration.

F. The decision of the committee is final.

IV. Hearing Process

The following procedures should be followed by the GAB:

- A. The student and the faculty member have the right to be present during the information gathering portion of any hearing, and both will be given the opportunity to present their cases. The presence of any witnesses supportive of either party shall be the responsibility of the student and/or the faculty member.
- B. Following the presentations of all parties involved, the GAB will meet in closed session to decide on the merits of the petition. Decisions will be forwarded within fifteen (15) class days to the Vice President for Academic Affairs.
- C. In its deliberations, the GAB may consult with appropriate sources of information and/or expertise if such consultation is deemed necessary for the decision-making process. All such sources, along with the reasons for consultation, shall be recorded in the GAB's final report on the appeal. The faculty member and the student shall each receive a copy of the final report.

D. If circumstances warrant, the GAB chairperson may alter the timelines contained in this document.

E. The Vice President of Academic Affairs will notify all parties involved (student, faculty member, department chairperson, and dean) of the decision. If the decision includes a change of grade, the Vice President for Academic Affairs will direct the Registrar to make the change and so notify the student and faculty member.

F. The decision of the committee is final.

V. Evaluation of Policy

A. At the end of each of the first two academic years following implementation of this policy, the GAB will submit to the president of the Senate and the president of APSCUF-CU a written report of the year's activities.

B. During the third academic year under this policy, the Senate Academic Standards and Policy Committee will recommend either to continue the policy unchanged, to revise it, or to discontinue it. This recommendation is to be approved by both the University Senate and APSCUF.